

Fresh Towels

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Summary: In the moments after a shower, Sam reflects on how life has been different ever since the Winchesters managed to shut the gates of hell forever.

## Fresh Towels

Hey bros, I'm back. I've been writing in a different fandom lately (How to Train Your Dragon, if you're interested). I'm not even going to talk about my Heroes fic. I'm sorry to let anyone down. Anyway, I hope you all are enjoying season 8 so far! I know I have been! Here's a little something set after they manage to close hell's gates, assuming they do manage it. HAHAHA HAPPY ENDINGS ON SUPERNATURAL WHAT A JOKE AMIRITE. Enjoy!

Disclaimer: I own only my feels.

oOo

Of all the things that could possibly get under your skin about civilian life, you pick the most ridiculous.  
>Steam billows into the bathroom as you grope around for your towel. Your quickly chilling fingers grasp cloth and you yank it into the warm confines of the shower. You press it to your face. There's an overwhelming perfume of some flowery detergent and bleach, and the towel is fluffy from its romp in the dryer.<p>

Your expression crumple. You quickly distance the cotton expanse from your nose.

Linda does the laundry. It's quite admirable how she willingly keeps up with the dirty clothes of four men in addition to her own. You never minded doing your own laundry, but it was one of the perks of the Trans coming to live in the Batcave. She also tackles most of the shopping. You've offered to take the job off her hands, but she insists, and you're not completely comfortable requesting an

unscented detergent when no one else minds.

You suppose it's her motherly instincts kicking in. Dean likes to think he's the head of the household, but when Linda tells him to do the dishes, he only makes a face when her back is turned. To be fair, Linda keeps the main areas free of dust and dirt. Funnily enough, that's the extent of her cleaning. She won't touch anyone's room. Kevin's door is constantly shut because Linda refuses to have his disaster zone marring her gleaming halls.

Kevin really couldn't care less. You hypothesize that leaving his room a mess is one of the ways he celebrates his freedom from prophet duties. That, or he just grew so used to living in squalor that it doesn't bother him. It's not like he'd bother with tidying up, though: he's back at college. He spends hours in the library poring over massive textbooks by lamplight. You'll check on him to make sure he's not overexerting himself. He'll assure you with a wry smile that no amount of Advanced Mathematical Theory would ever compare to deciphering an arcane angel language. Still, he will abandon the written word for video games if Dean pesters him enough.

You're glad the Trans decided to move into the Batcave instead of going back to Michigan. It had been much too quiet with just you and Dean and Cas in the gigantic headquarters. Dean always did his best to make noise for noise's sake, sometimes leaving on televisions and radios in multiple rooms to make it sound like a full house. This behavior desisted after the second time he had to tell Kevin to turn his damn stereo down. Cas was noticeably pleased at the cessation; on one occasion, the din had irritated him to the point of sapping the entire lair of electricity for three whole hours.

Castiel's affinity for relative silence frequently drove him outdoors. One afternoon, Dean became very agitated because he couldn't find the angel anywhere. You thought to check outside and found Cas digging resolutely in a patch of dirt. You were concerned until you saw a trowel, a shovel, a spade, and a hoe lying near a collection of flowers waiting to find a home in the ground.

"What are you doing?" Dean had asked.

"I'm planting a garden."

"Why?"

Cas enunciated each word: "Because I can."

Dean went silent for a full ten seconds, then, without another word, dropped to his knees and began coaxing the flowers out of their black plastic pots. You joined them.

The garden is your and Dean's and Cas's religion. Versailles could never hope to compete. Babylon's Hanging Gardens are window boxes. You're convinced that Cas took what he remembered of Eden and did his best to recreate it twenty feet from the house. It's no secret that Cas uses what's left of his mojo to make each blossom bloom as fully and long as possible. And it's not just flowers-every Thanksgiving has been supplied by the veritable farm adjacent to the garden. Even Dean eats salads if he knows the ingredients were picked only hours before.

You worship in the natural church without dwelling too hard on the symbolism. You rock lazily in the hammock as Dean weeds the tomatoes and quietly hums Metallica. A breeze makes the apple trees whisper, bringing with it the smell of fresh dirt and roses. You've never felt a peace more profound, more consuming. This is your temple. This is your holy place.

And as with any temple, there is a holy of holies. Cas is the high priest. You've never seen a darker look in his eyes than when you first tried to assist in the planting of this small patch of sacred ground. He told you in no uncertain terms that he did not require assistance. You backed away, fearing to take your eyes off him.

But now you understand, and you will never again try to interfere in that blessed place. Months after the incident, Cas invited you out. His entire being radiated a sort of release that was both contented and sorrowful. He escorted you to the fenced-off altar and allowed you to examine his handiwork.

Sunflowers cast their bright visages skyward. At their feet lay a small, painstakingly hand painted rock. That rock named the collection of sunflowers Jessica Moore.

You moved to a patch of gorgeous poppies. Their rock introduced them as Mary Winchester. The Mary flowers sweetly waved in the direction of their husband, John the globe amaranth. Bobby Singer's daffodils swayed in the breeze, thoroughly relaxed. Ellen-acacia kept a watchful eye over her daughter calla lily. The honeysuckles were clearly for Gabriel; you sucked a flower in his honor. Some edelweiss for Balthazar basked in the warm early summer day. An unnamed patch of baby's breath resided apart from the other plants. The entire shrine was hemmed in a ring of forget-me-nots.

You found yourself on your knees and crying, your face buried in a sunflower. Cas didn't leave your side until had composed yourself. Dean's reaction to the altar was similar but more extreme; you were afraid he had lost his faith until you found him watering the cucumbers. You dreaded winter's arrival. You weren't sure if you could handle seeing those flowers wither and die. But long after the rest of the garden faded away, after snow blanketed the ground, those precious plants were still as vibrant as the day you first saw them. You thanked Castiel with a too-tight, too-long hug. He understood.

Charlie comes to visit quite often-so often, in fact, that you keep a guest bedroom made up for her. Linda was originally a bit frosty towards the redhead, but eventually the two women bonded. Now when Charlie comes over, Linda has the men waiting on her hand and foot. Garth also frequents the Batcave. He's made it clear that he mostly comes for the garden. Garth is very careful not to say a word about the supernatural while under your roof. If you didn't know him better, you'd think he really was just a former dentist. The only allusion to hunting is just before he leaves, when you hand him any new information you've gleaned from the Men of Letters' vast mine of knowledge.

But you're not dumb. You know what's out there today just like you knew when you were a kid. You still catch snippets of the old life. Sometimes Dean will suddenly throw the paper across the table and head out to the garden, and you'll know he came across an obituary

with a strange cause of death. It's usually something relatively trivial like a vampire or werewolf or shifter; ever since you managed to close hell's gates, demonic activity has returned to nearly nothing. Kevin gets migraines and has to stay in bed for forty-eight-some hours. No painkillers help. You and Dean will awake in the middle of the night, screaming in terror and clutching ghost wounds. If either hears the other stir, you'll rush in with a glass of water and comforting yet empty words. Cas has been known to stand statue like in the garden for hours on end, only to return with a heavy sadness dripping off him like cold rain. You figure he still listens for other angels but hears nothing save the thundering wake of their silence.

You're also not careless. Barrels full of rock salt and holy water inhabit the basement. Iron and silver pieces have their respective places. Devil's traps adorn the ceilings of every room in the house, hidden by a few layers of polished eggshell-colored paint. Every so often, you and Dean spend an afternoon sparring and target practice, followed by a thorough gun cleaning over some cheap beer.  
>Those smells-the sweat, the gunpowder, the leather, the alcohol-they take you back.<p>

They make your skin crawl with long gone but never forgotten heat. They made your head and heart ache. Then you look over at Dean, who only keeps off the pudge by working on cars, and smell the gentle wafting of wisteria through the open window, and you breathe.

>Still, not a million days of too-sweet lemonade and listening to the crickets and having Linda read you to sleep can ever wipe away the past. Because sometimes you spill the salt at dinner. Sometimes you notice a car with a rosary hanging from the rear view mirror. Sometimes you cut yourself shaving. Sometimes you realize the whiskey has disappeared and you didn't drink it. Sometimes a lot of the flowers die in an early frost. And sometimes the towels are just a little too clean, bringing you back to a time where you'd inhale a different towel in a different motel room every week, a time where nothing was really yours but the clothes on your back and the car you rode in and the pain you buried deep in your bones.<p>

End  
file.